

Senator Cohen, Representative Gresko, Senator Miner, Representative Harding and Distinguished Members of the Environment Committee:

I support HB 5141, which is a positive measure to support conservation and help ensure that forage fish populations remain abundant into the future. Furthermore, it is our understanding that the proposed possession limits will not require CT bait fishermen to reduce their reported harvest. The proposed measures are not intended to reduce current harvest levels, rather they are intended to constrain future increases with the intent of ensuring long-term sustainability.

Healthy populations of forage fish are essential for supporting abundant gamefish populations and for maintaining thriving commercial and recreational fisheries. Forage fish populations are also an important food source for many of the birds, reptiles and marine mammals that live in and adjacent to Connecticut's waters and wetlands.

I urge the Committee to make two changes to the bill, as specified by the Fisheries Advisory Council (FAC). Specifically, FAC recommends the bill should be incorporated into Sec. 26-127, which pertains to conservation of bait species, instead of 26-142a. The FAC also recommends the removal of Section 2 of this bill pertaining to bait dealer since the intent of the bill is to limit the harvest and possession of these forage species on the waters of the state and is not intended to limit the numbers that can be possessed at a place of business.

Respectfully,

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